



## Possibility Parenting

### Hopes & Dreams

Karen DeBord, Ph.D.

Professor & State Extension Specialist

Child Development

SW: This is SW with Parenting and Child Development Extension Specialist at NC State University, Karen DeBord. Today's Possibility Parenting addresses teaching young children values. Dr. DeBord, parents try very hard to teach their children the right way to act and behave. Teaching values is a difficult piece to understand. Can you advise parents on this?

KD: The first thing to do as a parent is to ask yourself what you hope for your children. What are your dreams? What do you expect of your children? Do you expect them to be loving? Do you expect them to be kind? Do you expect them to be honest or hard working? These are values that can be learned.

To teach values, we teach first, through examples. If you want kindness, you must exhibit kindness and respect within your family and all your relationships. It is amazing what children observe and learn just by watching. Then they reflect it to you like a mirror.

Remember that children have developmental stages of understanding. Learning is a continual process. Good models (parents in particular) who exhibit caring behaviors and responsible actions are the best teachers. With young children, create conversations. Use open-ended questions that start with "Tell me about" or "what if." Such open-ended questions help children think through a decision.

We also teach through stories we share with children, and through the traditions and routines we perform (bedtimes, eating together, holidays, etc). As children get older (towards adolescence) they need to talk about WHYs and HOWs. Then, they REALLY need a listening ear to guide them. They need someone who takes the time to listen and really hear. Parenting is about connecting with the child! By conveying values of caring to children, children then reflect it back.

I'm Karen DeBord with Possibility Parenting.